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# ADDRESS

TO

THE PEOPLE OF BURLINGTON

IN REFERENCE TO THE AWFUL EVENTS OF AUG. 29, 1855.

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A meeting of citizens of Burlington was held in the City Hall, Sept. 12, 1855, pursuant to a public call "to give expression to the serious feelings appropriate to the impressive and afflicting dispensation of Providence which has recently occurred in our midst."

After the object of the meeting had been briefly stated by the Chairman, Dr. J. Howard Pugh, the Rev. F. R. Harbaugh made an eloquent and impressive discourse, and in conclusion moved the appointment of a Committee to draft an Address to the People of Burlington. The Chair appointed Rev. F. R. Harbaugh, Wm. R. Allen, Esq. and Rev. John Reynolds, who withdrew, and on returning reported a document which was accepted. A spirited and interesting discussion ensued, which was participated in by Messrs. Harbaugh, Reynolds, Allinson, Allen, South, Dr. Chaloner, &c. The discussion of second causes, and every thing intended to cast censure in any direction was excluded, the order of the meeting being decided to be an expression of feeling respecting the event as a dispensation of Divine Providence, with a view of impressing the solemn lessons therein contained. Much regret being expressed that an Exhibition intended to excite merriment, should have been held in the City Hall, at such a season of solemnity and mourning, it was explained that the use of the building had been contracted for before the disaster, and that the Showman having incurred considerable expense, refused to relinquish his claim.

On motion of Wm. R. Allen, Esq. the Essay of the Committee was referred to a publication Committee composed of the Rev. F. R. Harbaugh, Wm. R. Allen, Rev. John Reynolds, George W. South and William J. Allinson.

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The Prophet Isaiah has declared that "when the judgments of the Lord are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." (Is. 26, 9.) Even now, "His judgments are in all the earth." The eventful history of the present day, most plainly indicates that we are drawing nigh unto some most momentous crisis. War, Pestilence and Famine, those terrible ministers of desolation, are at this hour declaring the messages of the All-Wise God to the children of men. And especially—by the *local* calamity in *our* midst, has God given to the people of this community a most solemn and palpable admonition. The sudden and violent termination of useful and endeared lives—the number of suffering, maimed and mangled, the intense grief, and irreparable loss felt by many and widely extended circles of relatives and friends, the full extent of which can be known only to Him, who in His inscrutable wisdom, sees fit at times to plead with his creatures "by terrible things in righteousness"—deeply impressed with all the circumstances of the Divine displeasure, so palpable in the *manner* and *locality* of this visitation—and believing that such signal and local judgments of the Almighty, are because of signal and *local* sin—it becomes us, in the deepest humility and penitence to prostrate ourselves as a *community* before God, and supplicate the removal of those sins, which are bringing the tokens of His holy and righteous displeasure so fearfully nigh unto us. It becomes us also to offer our united thanksgiving and praise to God, for the indications of His goodness mingled with His severity, in sparing the lives of those of our fellow citizens, who were sharers of such imminent death.

It becomes us also, from the fact of this Divine visitation occurring at *our very doors*, acquainting us with scenes of mutilation and destruction, until "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint," thronging our houses with the dead and dying—filling our streets with the mourners—all these circumstances, so affecting in themselves, so impressive because ordained by God for wise and good purposes, we feel call loudly upon us as a sinful and *warned* community, to turn speedily in repentance and faith to our holy Redeemer and Intercessor, before the infliction of our chastisement come upon us.

The people of Burlington deeply sympathize with the sufferers now or recently in our midst—with bereaved wives and husbands, parents and children, and with all who mourn the death or injuries of relatives or friends. That sympathy was promptly shown in deeds of mercy by our inhabitants of every class, without distinction of sex, occupation or condition in life. We can appeal to one another that our hearts were tendered with sympathy and grief; that the terrible event, to a great extent excluded other subjects from our thoughts,—that we ate our meals sparingly, and with sadness,—and that we had no desire for public shows to excite levity and merriment, to grate harshly upon the feelings of our afflicted visitors, and to turn the thoughts of the people from the impressive lesson and the solemn warning which our heavenly Father had spoken to us all. It has been, therefore, a source of pain, of mortification and deep regret to us, that displays of the kind should have been brought, by strangers, at such a time, into this sorrowing community, and that scenes of folly should be enacted in the very building so lately used as a receptacle for the mutilated dead. We express ourselves on this subject with kindness and tenderness, and we desire



to call the attention of the people to the solemnity of life, to the vanity and folly of premeditated mirth, to the loss which the soul sustains from everything that dissipates religious collectedness of mind, to the very subordinate place in life, which those who are wise will assign to mere amusement, and to the fearful condition of all those of whom it may be said that "God is not in all their thoughts."

In conclusion, we cannot forbear a reference to those who evinced, at this awful moment, that their peace was made with God. Who of us has not been impressed with the beautiful confidence of the sufferer who, when stricken with sudden death, calmly declared that his trust was reposed in his Saviour, and who resigned his life when its ties were strongest, and its prospects fairest, with peace and hope and holy joy. Let his exhortation to his absent friends sink deep in all our hearts—"Tell them to put their trust in the Saviour—tell them not to put off a preparation—*tell them not to trifle.*"

"Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing." "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."

By every incident of this awful event—by the merciful preservation of those who escaped unhurt—by the sudden departure of those who had no time to cry "God be merciful to me, a sinner"—by the blessedness of those who had their portion in Christ, and whose robes were made white by His atoning blood—by the sparing mercy which has saved us from destruction—and by the warning of impending judgment, we are solemnly admonished to PREPARE TO MEET OUR GOD.



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